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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 08/17/06

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Articles:

- 1) Cabinet support rate hits 45%

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
August 17, 2006

In a nationwide opinion poll carried out on Aug. 15-16, the Mainichi found the Koizumi Cabinet support rate had risen 1 point from the July poll to 45%, while the non-support rate had dropped 3 points to 37%. The main reason for supporting the Cabinet, cited by 45% (4 points higher than last time) was, "The way of carrying out politics seems to be changing," followed by, "Leadership can be expected from Prime Minister Koizumi," chosen by 29% (up 2 points). The main reason for not supporting the Koizumi Cabinet, cited by 55% (up 2 points) was, "I can't feel that the economy has recovered."

As for political party support rates, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party rose 1 point to 32%, while the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) dropped 2 points to 17%. The New Komeito and the Japanese Communist Party each rose a point to 5% and 4%, respectively. The Social Democratic Party stayed the same at 2%

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. Those who chose no party affiliation totaled 37%, up 1 point from last time.

- 2) Abe support rate at 54% ; Tanigaki's at 11% in Yomiuri poll

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
August 17, 2006

In a spot opinion poll taken after the visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi, the question was asked who would be the most appropriate person to succeed Koizumi, choosing from the three Liberal Democratic Party candidates in the race. The candidate that respondents chose most frequently was Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe, who received 54% of the tally. Coming in second place was Finance Minister Tanigaki with 11%, and third was Foreign Minister Aso with 7%. Compared to a telephone-based spot survey July 6-7 following North Korea's launching of missiles, Tanigaki picked up 9 points in support, many former Fukuda supporters shifting his way. Abe's support rose 7 points, while Aso's was up 3 points. The Koizumi Cabinet support rate in the new poll was 52.3%, up 3.8 points from the July poll.

- 3) Mainichi poll following Prime Minister Koizumi's August 15 visit to Yasukuni Shrine: 50% approve; 46% critical, but view about successor making visits is severe

MAINICHI (Top play) (Excerpt)
August 17, 2006

Following Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's paying homage at Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15, the anniversary of the end of the war, the Mainichi Shimbun carried out a spot nationwide opinion poll on Aug. 15-16 to gauge public reaction. The result was that 50% of respondents positively evaluated the visit, while 46% did not. On the other hand, asked about whether the next prime minister should visit Yasukuni, 47% were opposed, and 42% approved. It is clear that even in the case of Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe's April 15 visit to Yasukuni, those who disapproved outweighed those who approved. The public has looked on Prime Minister Koizumi's paying homage at the shrine in a different light, it appears.

4) Kyodo poll: 51% thought the Prime Minister's Yasukuni visit was "good"; 44% were against it

TOKYO (Top play) (Excerpt)
August 17, 2006

Following the visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi on Aug. 15, the anniversary of the end of the war, Kyodo News Service carried out a spot nationwide telephone-based opinion poll on Aug. 15-16 to gauge public reaction. The result showed 51.5% or a majority of the public thought the "visit was good," but when asked about a visit by the next prime minister, negative views outweighed positive ones, with 44.5% saying, "He should not go," and 39.6% saying that he should. Asked about Class-A war criminal enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine, 60.4% said that they "should be separated" from the shrine.

5) Yomiuri poll: 53% support Prime Minister's paying homage at Yasukuni Shrine, but 54% worried about worsening Japanese relations with China, ROK

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YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpt)
August 17, 2006

Following Prime Minister Koizumi's paying homage at Yasukuni on Aug. 15, the anniversary of the end of the war, the Yomiuri Shimbun carried out a nationwide spot opinion poll Aug. 15-16 (telephone-based) to gauge public response. The result showed that 53% of the public either supported or somewhat supported the shrine visit, while 39% in total were against it. Asked to choose from different reasons for supporting the visit, the most chosen response with 35% of the respondents was "it is only natural that the prime minister honor the war dead," while 31% chose, "in order to make a pledge for no more war." Among those who did not support the visit, 41% chose the answer, "relations with China and South Korea have worsened," 27% picked, "because Class-A war criminals are enshrined there," and 16% said, "it violated the principle of separation of church and state."

6) Yomiuri poll: Asked about where would be an appropriate place for a war-dead memorial, 60% preferred it should be "other than Yasukuni Shrine as it is now"

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpt)
August 17, 2006

In this newspaper's spot opinion poll following Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, the question was asked where would be an appropriate place to honor the war dead of the country. Over 60% of the respondents chose answers indicating that they wanted it to be "other than Yasukuni Shrine as it is now." In comparison, compared 25% picked Yasukuni Shrine. Breaking the 60% down, 30% chose "a new facility run by the government with no religious association," while 19% chose "Yasukuni Shrine after the Class-A war criminals are removed." Another 11% wanted "Chidorigafuchi Cemetery to be expanded and built" into a war memorial cemetery.

7) Government demands Moscow's apology and release of crew members of boat shot by Russian patrol boat; "Japanese fishing boat is responsible," Russia says

YOMIURI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
August 17, 2006

A Russian Border Coast Guard patrol boat fired at a Japanese crabbing boat, No. 31 Kisshin Maru, yesterday morning in waters near Kaigara island, one of the Habomai islets in the Russia-held northern territories. Mitsuhiro Morita, 35, one of the crew members was shot and killed. The Japanese government yesterday called on Russia for speedy handover of the body of Morita and immediate release of other crew members. The Russian Boarder Coast Guard notified the Japanese Consulate in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk of the handover of Morita's body soon after inquest on it. The body of Morita will

be handed over to Japan tomorrow at the earliest. However since Russia has insisted that the Japanese fishing boat is responsible for the incident, it is uncertain when the other three crew members will be released.

According to the consulate, the three crew members are not injured and are being questioned by prosecutors on Kunashiri, one of the four northern islands, on suspicion of border violation and illegal fishing operations. The prosecutors are now detaining the three.

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The Russian Border Coast Guard said, "The skipper has admitted they entered waters on the Russian side. The consulate said, "Whether the three will be indicted is unknown at present."

According to the news agency Interfax, the fishing boat fled, ignoring the Russian patrol vessel's command to stop and its crew members threw away its catch of crabs and octopus. The Russian patrol boat fired a warning shot at the Japanese fishing boat but the fishing boat stopped after patrol boat fired a second warning shot. The patrol boat found a large amount of crabs, 10 kilograms of octopus, and 25 crab baskets on the ship.

8) Russian patrol boat shoots at Japanese fishing boat; Territorial dispute to drag on further; Emotions in Japan and Russia worsen

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 17, 2006

A Russian boarder patrol boat yesterday fired on a Japanese fishing boat, killing one of the crewmembers and detaining the other three. The incident took place near Kaigara, one of the Habomai islets. With the occurrence of the incident, a resolution of the Northern Territories dispute will unavoidably be delayed.

Foreign Minister Taro Aso summoned the charge d'affaires at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo and protested strongly, saying, "This incident occurred near the Northern Territories, which are Japanese territory. This absolutely cannot be allowed."

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Russian President Putin held talks last November in Tokyo. Koizumi called for reaffirming the 1993 Tokyo Declaration, which stipulates that the two countries will conclude a peace treaty after resolving the issue of ownership of the four islands that constitute the Northern Territories. Putin, however, rejected it, making clear Russia's stance of not making concession to Japan on the territorial issue.

9) Taiwanese group sailing for Senkaku islets in protest against prime minister's Yasukuni visit

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
August 17, 2006

Nobomi Hayashi, Hong Kong

In a move to protest against Prime Minister Koizumi's latest visit to Yasukuni Shrine and other issues, five members of the Taiwanese group claiming Taiwan's sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands (called the Diaoyutai Islands in Chinese) left Taiwan for the islands by fishing boat last night. They are expected to arrive at the islands this morning.

One of the members stated before leaving the port:

"We criticize Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni visit and also protest against Japan's obstruction to fishing operations by Taiwanese fishing boats in waters near the Senkaku islets."

The Taiwanese group was scheduled to arrive at the islets together with a group from Hong Kong on Aug. 15, but since Chinese authorities caught the Hong Kong group members, the Taiwan group

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decided to take action independently.

From Taiwan and Hong Kong, at least four boats sailed for the Senkaku islets in protest in and after 1996.

10) Kanagawa governor decides to accept US nuclear carrier deployment at Yokosuka

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 26) (Full)
August 17, 2006

Kanagawa Governor Matsuzawa revealed yesterday that the prefectural government would accept the United States' plan to deploy a nuclear aircraft carrier at Yokosuka Naval Base in Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture. Matsuzawa said: "There will be no option but to accept it on the condition that systems be firmly established to ensure safe operations and prevent accidents."

The governments of Japan and the US agreed last October to deploy a nuclear carrier in 2008. In response, Yokosuka Mayor Ryoichi Kabaya announced this June his government's acceptance of the deployment.

Governor Matsuzawa, however, had put off a decision by the prefecture, citing unclear points in a document presented by the US military this April on the safety of the nuclear aircraft carrier. He also feared an accident that would inevitably bring about a serious effect on far-reaching local communities.

Governor Matsuzawa said: "I was able to confirm the two governments' positive stance to ensure the safety of the nuclear carrier." Specifically, he favorably responded to this reply by the Foreign Ministry to his inquiries: "A system has been established to require the US military to report even a minor accident to the Japanese government and relevant local communities, and the impact of any accident would be limited to a 3-km radius."

11) Government to unofficially ask Okinawa to hold preparatory meeting for establishment of "Futenma" council

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
August 17, 2006

The central government will unofficially ask the Okinawa prefectural government today to hold meetings to prepare setting up a council tasked with discussing plans to construct a new facility to take over the US Futenma Air Station's heliport functions. The government has set forth the participation of the central government, the prefectural government, and relevant local governments such as Nago City as the precondition for establishing the council. With no agreement reached between the central and prefectural governments, the idea has been in limbo. The government intends to discuss in the three-party preparatory meetings what the council should be, including whether or not to place the requests from Okinawa on the agenda, and try to find common ground.

Defense Agency Director General Nukaga plans to visit Okinawa this week to make a similar proposal to Governor Keiichi Inamine and others.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Masahiro Futahashi met Defense Facilities Administration Agency's Facilities Department Director General Watanabe and others at the Prime Minister's Official

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Residence yesterday. They decided to unofficially call on the relevant local governments to hold preparatory meetings. Watanabe will be visiting Okinawa today to convey this idea to relevant prefectural government officials.

12) Abe to propose broad constitutional revision in policy platform, give priority to growth, spending cuts

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Full)
August 17, 2006

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, the most likely winner of the Liberal Democratic Party presidential election, will release a policy platform on September 1. According to an outlined released yesterday, Abe will propose revising the Constitution, including ending the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense. In economic policy, he is willing to give priority to economic growth and spending cuts without referring to the timing and size of a hike in the consumption tax. The policy platform also stresses the need to promote concluding free trade agreements (FTA) with Asian countries, as well as countries rich in natural resources, such as those in the Middle East.

In the policy platform, Abe expresses his intention to basically continue the Koizumi administration's structural reform line but also indicates a willingness to alter parts of the Koizumi policy line by specifying program under which the government helps failed companies or the employed regain their footing or find another job. The platform contains policies of a more conservative bent than those of the Koizumi administration. For instance, it proposes educational reform respecting feelings toward families, hometowns, and the state, as well as a revision of the Basic Education Law.

The policy platform suggests that the current standards in the social security system as a safety net should be maintained. In order to make the system sustainable, Abe aims to reform the pension, medical, and nursing systems in a package.

On amendments to the Constitution, the platform does not come up with specific proposals, but it sets forth the policy of promoting discussion based on the revision plan drafted by the LDP last year. On the controversial issue of revising Article 9, the platform specifies that Japan will possess a "Self-Defense Military." Abe is willing to endorse collective defense not by stating it clearly in Article 9 but by changing the government's interpretation of the article. He proposes rewriting the preamble to clarify that it is Japan's own Constitution.

On the diplomatic front, Abe will stress the importance of strengthening the Japan-US alliance and expanding democracy in Asia in a bid to apply pressure to China. He also proposes establishing a Japanese-version of the National Security Council (NSC) tasked with working out diplomatic and security strategies. He will also express his determination to resolve the abduction issue.

Abe will not refer to the Yasukuni issue in the policy platform in order to prevent it from becoming a diplomatic matter.

13) Takeo Hiranuma to lecture Ozawa group next month

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 17, 2006

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A group of junior lawmakers from the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) will hold a study session in September in Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture. The group is called Isshin-kai. Former trade minister Takeo Hiranuma, who bolted the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) after he voted against the government's postal-privatization bill, will attend the session as a lecturer, it was learned yesterday.

The study session will be held on Sept. 2-4. Hiranuma is expected to give a lecture on Sept. 4, the last day of the session. Hiranuma has been carrying out political activities as an independent since he left the LDP last October. The Isshin-kai apparently aims to strengthen its alliance with anti-postal-privatization LDP rebels with an eye on next summer's House of Councillors election.

It is certain that Minshuto and the LDP will clash in the single-seat constituency in Hiroshima, from which Hiranuma comes. Toranosuke Katayama, secretary general of the LDP caucus in the Upper House, is expected to run in the race. The largest opposition party Minshuto, however, has yet to pick its own candidate. The party thinks that if its candidate defeats Katayama, it will mean the party wins the Upper House election. Therefore, Minshuto is

looking forward to obtaining support from Hiranuma.

SCHIEFFER